

## **1994 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND**

### **MISSOURI REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**

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MEL CARNAHAN  
GOVERNOR

MISSOURI  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES

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RELAY MISSOURI  
for hearing and speech impaired

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December 27, 1994

Governor Mel Carnahan  
Missouri State Capitol Building  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Dear Governor Carnahan:

With this letter you will find the annual report produced by the Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind. In our first year we have managed to build a foundation by writing by-laws, appointing committees, reviewing agency operations and budgets and making recommendations to improve the programs we have been asked to oversee.

It is the hope of our Advisory Council that you find this report readable and informative. We are anxious to answer any questions you have either about our work or the work of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

Cordially,

*Gary Wunder*  
Gary Wunder *leg mmy*  
Chairman  
Rehabilitation Advisory Council  
for the Blind



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December 27, 1994

Fred Schroeder, Commissioner  
United States Department of Education  
Office of Special Education and  
Rehabilitation Services  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Commissioner Schroeder:

With this letter you will find the annual report produced by the Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind. In our first year we have managed to build a foundation by writing by-laws, appointing committees, reviewing agency operations and budgets and making recommendations to improve the programs we have been asked to oversee.

It is the hope of our Advisory Council that you find this report readable and informative. We are anxious to answer any questions you have either about our work or the work of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

Cordially,

*Gary Wunder*  
Gary Wunder *by R.H.*  
Chairman  
Rehabilitation Advisory Council  
for the Blind

**REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND**

**CHAIRMAN - GARY WUNDER**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN - JERRY ANNUNZIO**

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**STAFF MEMBERS - RITA LYNCH**  
**MIKE MERRICK**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The State Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind (RACB) was created by Executive Order 93—01, signed by Governor Mel Carnahan on February 5, 1993. The Council is mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1992. Under Section 105 of the amended Act, the Council is charged with reviewing, analyzing, and advising Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, a section of the Division of Family Services, on its performance relating to:

- a. Eligibility
- b. The extent, scope, and effectiveness of services
- c. Functions that affect or potentially affect the achievement of rehabilitation goals by consumers
- d. Preparation of the State and Strategic Plans
- e. Consumer satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services

The Council has been intimately involved with all of the areas mentioned above. During their first year the Council has:

- \* advised RSB on eligibility issues
- \* surveyed consumers and providers of vocational rehabilitation services
- \* assisted in preparation of the State and Strategic Plans
- \* advocated for RSB with the state legislature in support of the RSB budget
- \* developed a position paper supporting the acceptance of extended employment as competitive employment, a position which was key to the design of the pre—draft Federal regulation regarding the definition of competitive employment.
- \* held public forums to improve public access to the policy process

These efforts to improve consumer involvement with the rehabilitation process are evidenced by the rehabilitation outcomes experienced by blind and visually impaired consumers in Missouri.

## **SECTION I. STATUS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED OF MISSOURI**

### **1. Resources:**

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) is the agency that provides vocational rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired persons in Missouri under the auspices of its parent organization, the Division of Family Services. RSB has a central administrative office located in Jefferson City and six district offices located in Jefferson City, Kansas City, Sikeston, Springfield, and St. Louis (two offices) which provide direct services to clients. During FY 1994, RSB has received authorization to employ 117 staff members who will be involved directly or indirectly in the delivery of VR services. In addition to the administrative staff and district supervisors, RSB staff includes sixteen VR counselors, sixteen rehabilitation teachers, six orientation and mobility specialists, six employees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program, one training technician (who will work approximately half-time as staff support for the Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind), one job development specialist, nineteen rehabilitation technicians, and seventeen support staff.

The Missouri legislature appropriated a total of approximately \$4.8 million in Federal and State Funds to be used during State FY 1995 for provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who apply for and who receive

VR services. For State FY 1995, the State Legislature appropriated a financial match which provided RSB with a total increase in case service funds of \$1.6 million. These funds are fully matched at the mandated level by State General Revenue and other matching funds. It is anticipated that, with the significant increase described above, the funds will be adequate to meet client service needs.

### **2. Caseload:**

The present VR caseload is 1548, with 1335 of those individuals in Status 02 and above and 1133 in Status 10 and above. In addition to the sixteen VR counselors who work full-time on VR cases, the sixteen rehabilitation teachers carry all cases in which the clients' goal is homemaker (281 cases). Since the average VR caseload in Status 10 and above, after deducting those cases whose employment goal is homemaker, is 53.25 cases, we believe RSB has sufficient personnel to provide services to all individuals who are eligible for services. During FY 1994, RSB reported 358 cases in Status 08, 70 cases in Status 28, 61 cases in status 30, and 241 cases in Status 26. There were 934 referrals for services, with 495 cases determined to be eligible and 385 cases closed prior to determination of eligibility. This resulted in an eligibility rate of 58% (number of cases determined eligible divided by total of cases closed prior to determination of eligibility plus the number of cases determined to be eligible). RSB reported 241 cases of successful rehabilitation, 70 cases of

unsuccessful rehabilitation where Individualized Written Rehabilitation plan services had been provided, and 61 cases of unsuccessful rehabilitation where no services had been provided. This resulted in a rehabilitation rate of 65% (number of cases closed as the result of successful rehabilitation divided by the total of successful cases, unsuccessful cases following Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan services, and unsuccessful cases closed prior to Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan service provision).

### 3. Contracted rehabilitation programs:

The Division of Family Services (DFS) contracts through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process with five community rehabilitation programs for comprehensive assessment and provision of comprehensive personal and vocational adjustment services to VR clients of RSB. Those facilities are:

Rehabilitation Institute, Kansas City, Missouri  
Colorado Center for the Blind, Denver, Colorado  
Iowa Center for the Blind, Des Moines, Iowa  
Lion's World Services for the Blind, Little Rock, Arkansas  
The Carroll Center for the Blind, Newton, Massachusetts

RSB uses a number of different methods to determine the adequacy of existing community rehabilitation program services, obtaining information from agency staff and clients. RSB is conducting a survey of clients who have

received services at community rehabilitation programs, which gives clients the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the effectiveness and quality of services. In addition to the above, RSB administrative and supervisory staff met for two days with the director and staff of Blind Focus to discuss effectiveness of current programming and to identify elements of what could be considered a "model" community rehabilitation facility program.

There have been initial discussions with Missouri Goodwill Industries regarding improvement and expansion of vocational evaluation, vocational training, and placement programs. During the next year, RSB plans to conduct meetings with the organization and RSB staff regarding the above issues. The plan is to utilize this input to develop specific plans for program improvement and expansion and for provision of in-service training to facility staff.

The ability of RSB personnel who provide direct services to individuals who plan to work in competitive employment will be enhanced in FY 1995 and thereafter by the job development specialist hired during FY 1994. This individual is to be responsible for training staff in job development/placement techniques and for developing programs such as an applicant bank and employer bank to support staff in their placement efforts.

#### **4. Procedural changes during FY 1994:**

Fiscal Year 1994 is the first year for which RSB has had a Strategic Plan, as required by Title I, Part C. A statewide strategic planning session was held June 1—3, 1994. During this meeting the Strategic Plan was reviewed, updated, and amended. Changes in the Strategic Plan are delineated in that document.

In response to delays experienced in delivery of consumer equipment, RSB received approval from the Division of Purchasing for our Central Office to order equipment directly from the vendor rather than having the order processed through them. This change saves several weeks in the delivery time for equipment. RSB has also established an inventory of frequently purchased equipment. This allows immediate delivery of these items when required.

Based on a study of the time it was taking for consumers to be determined eligible for RSB services, a letter is now being sent to all applicants encouraging their active participation in order to expedite the eligibility determination process.

As a result of issues raised by consumer organizations, RSB has a formal proposal under review by the Division of Family Services specifying the role RSB staff will have in informing clients about these organizations. Further, it will allow RSB to mail consumer group literature to clients along with the above-mentioned applicant letter.

As a result of issues surrounding access of potential consumers, individuals, and community organizations to information

about RSB services, an 800 number phone system has been put in place during FY 1994. TDD'S are planned for installation in all RSB offices.

#### **5. Services to individuals with the most severe disabilities/minorities/ unserved or underserved populations:**

RSB utilizes a number of methods in efforts to expand and improve services to individuals with the most severe disabilities and to individuals who are minorities or who have been unserved or underserved. These methods include:

(a) Development and use of contracts to community rehabilitation programs for provision of supported employment services. RSB currently has thirteen such contracts. One of the supported employment contracts provides services only to individuals who are severely developmentally disabled, while several other contracts serve individuals with multiple disabilities.

(b) RSB staff will attempt to identify providers of ongoing support for supported employment clients who are blind but because they are neither developmentally disabled nor mentally ill, are not eligible for ongoing support from any of the present contractors. One such provider has been found — Rehabilitation Institute in Kansas City.

(c) RSB cooperated with a number of other agencies in sponsoring a week long training session on services to individuals who are deaf-blind. Three RSB service delivery staff attended this training, which was presented by Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). In

addition, two service delivery staff attended a week long training session on serving individuals who are deaf-blind at HKNC, and, to date, one individual is already scheduled to go in FY 1995.

(d) RSB staff provided in-service training on issues of blindness and alternative techniques to Supported Employment contractors, Metropolitan Employment and Rehabilitation Services and Missouri Goodwill Industries. An ongoing relationship in regard to these issues has been maintained in order to further enhance the skills of these organizations in providing services to RSB consumers.

(e) A Cooperative Agreement between RSB and the Missouri School for the Blind, which provides guidelines for transition programming by blind students at MSB, includes guidelines for providing services to students/clients who are so severely disabled they are unable to participate in the regular school course of study, was finalized and is now in place. RSB is using this agreement as a model for use with individual school districts.

(f) An RSB administrative staff member continues to serve on the state long-range planning council for services to individuals who are deaf-blind. In addition, staff participate in the two local deaf-blind task forces in St. Louis and Kansas City and St. Joseph.

(g) RSB has been working with the Project Director of the RSA Region VII Regional Cultural Diversity Initiative (RCDI) regarding development of strategies to ensure that minorities or those who have been unserved or

underserved receive adequate VR services. A number of activities are being considered: 1) provision of cultural diversity training by RCDI to RSB staff; 2) community development to identify "non-traditional" leaders and work with them to increase community awareness of available RSB services; and 3) internships for minority students.

(h) During Federal FY 1994, RSB staff participated in training provided by RSA Region VII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program on supported employment.

(i) In order to enable field staff to devote more time to direct services to the most severely disabled and to the coordination of these services with other community organizations, RSB has been allocated 19 positions for rehabilitation technicians. The rehabilitation technicians will assume responsibility for much of the paperwork processing, statistical, and fiscal duties previously performed by field staff.

(j) The RSB automation project has moved forward in FY 1994, computerizing much of the staff's paper work processing, fiscal, and statistical work, further enabling them to spend more time in direct consumer services and community outreach programs. It is anticipated that by the end of FY 1995, all software for the system will have been installed, the network will be functional, initial staff training will have been completed and case processing will be "on line".

## **SECTION II. ACTIVITIES OF THE REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND DURING FY 1994**

### **1. Creation of the Advisory Council:**

The Advisory Council was created by Executive Order 93—01, signed on February 5, 1993 by Governor Mel Carnahan. On September 9, 1993, the initial group of appointees met in Jefferson City to form the Council and address the construct and direction of the Council. RSB Director, Dave Vogel, introduced the Council members and turned direction of the meeting over to Edna Freeman, President of the Missouri Council of the Blind and Gary Wunder, President of the National Federation of the Blind to Co-Chair pending decisions on officers and elections to take place at a future meeting.

### **2. Development of the Council structure:**

During the first meeting of the Advisory Council, the matters of elections, officers, and by-laws for operational guidance were discussed. A subcommittee was formed to work on by-laws for the Council. This subcommittee, chaired by Rhonda Dycus, was tasked with creating the initial rules relating to officers and elections to allow for the installation of a permanent structure for the Council. A copy of the by-laws of the Advisory Committee was sent out to each member to provide background information in the development process. During this discussion, the decision was made that officers would consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary/Treasurer, with two members selected at large to

serve on an Executive Board. At the meeting held on November 13—14, 1993, the by-laws pertaining to the election and responsibilities of officers were discussed and adopted. Following this action, elections were held, with Gary Wunder being elected Chairperson, Lucille Fierce as Vice-Chairperson, Larry Arnold as Secretary/Treasurer, LoRena Perkins and Rick Burch as Executive Board members. The remainder of the by-laws were then discussed and adopted.

### **3. Meetings during the first year of the Advisory Council:**

Five meetings were held by the Council during the first year of operation. In addition to the creation of by-laws and the determination of officers to be elected, the Council was asked to review and comment on RSB's State and Strategic Plans at the first Council meeting. This review, which was required prior to submission of these documents to RSA, illustrated to Council members and RSB staff alike the depth of Council involvement in future planning for rehabilitation services in Missouri.

The quarterly meetings of the Council are scheduled to take place in cities around the state. During the first year four of the five meetings were held in Jefferson City. In August, 1994, the Council held its first meeting outside of Jefferson City. This meeting, held in Springfield, Missouri, was a model for

future meetings, allowing public input into the workings of the Council as well as increasing public awareness of Council activities. Meeting in different cities throughout the state allows easier access to members of the public who wish to make comments on matters brought before the Council. Publicity is coordinated with the RSB staff and Council members in the local area prior to the meeting to increase public knowledge of the meeting and to encourage attendance of interested parties.

Some of the subjects discussed or taken action on by the Council include:

**Changes in service delivery due to the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act**

**Review and discussion of the RSB Budget**

**Acceptance by RSA of extended employment placements as competitive employment**

**Selection of Fair Hearing Officers**

**Training and development needs of Pre—School Rehabilitation Teachers**

**Requiring consumers to demonstrate mastery of requisite skills as a condition of RSB support for rehabilitation services**

**Elimination and modification of rehabilitation service limitations as expressed in the Administrative Rule**

**Consumer satisfaction with assistive technology availability and services**

**Liaison with other Councils as mandated in the Rehabilitation Act**

**The concept of full—inclusion in the regular classroom of children who are blind or visually—impaired**

**Availability of braille instruction/use of paraprofessionals to teach braille for children in the regular school setting**

**Development and approval of the RSB Strategic Plan**

**The impact of transportation initiatives in St. Charles County for the blind and visually impaired of the region**

**Review and comment on the RSB Adminstrative Rule**

**Review and comment on RSB State Plan attachments**

**Discussion of Rehabilitation Teacher hiring qualifications and procedures**

#### **4. Consumer input:**

During the first year of operation, the Council went to great lengths to gather consumer input to guide in determining the priorities and needs of consumers in rehabilitation programs.

The information was gathered through a variety of means, including a survey sent out to 2,200 current and former RSB clients, a survey of Rehabilitation Counselors employed by RSB, and a survey of vendors/contractors of services for assistive technology. The results of these surveys were reported to RSB, reinforcing the input received from RSB's public meetings. This input resulted in changes to technology services provided to blind and visually impaired persons in Missouri, including improved ordering procedures and stocking of high-usage equipment on hand.

Public forums on assistive technology services provided by RSB were held in Kansas City and Springfield to allow consumers to voice their opinions and concerns. The results of these forums were included in reports to the Council and used to advise RSB on programs and policy changes needed to improve assistive technology services to consumers. These forums were conducted by Council members in their home communities, providing a source of consumer feedback independent of the agency, promoting a free and open interchange of ideas and concerns.

##### **5. Council participation in RSB planning functions:**

Since its creation, the Council has been represented at many RSB functions to allow for consumer input into the planning of future operations, budget items, and policies. Six members of the Advisory Council participated in RSB's

Strategic Planning meeting held June 1—3, 1994. Council members took part in all of the discussion groups, and took a leadership role in one of the groups. Following this session, a Standards Committee was created to formulate a policy expressing RSB's expectations of client participation in the rehabilitation process. Two Council members took part in the committee meetings and the development of draft standards which are under consideration by RSB and the Advisory Council at this time.

##### **6. Liaison with other Councils/agencies:**

At the February 11—12 meeting of the Council, liaisons were appointed for contact with the Statewide Independent Living Council, the P.L. 94—142 Panel, the Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, and the Advisory Council for Comprehensive Psychological Services. Initial contact has been made with each of these entities and Advisory Council members have begun the process of improving communications among the many agencies and groups charged with providing services to persons with disabilities in Missouri. Each of the other Councils have been invited to appoint a liaison to the Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind to help in this communicative effort.

##### **7. Identification of subjects for future Council consideration:**

Consumer standards — The development and authorization of standards requiring consumer participation in the rehabilitation process

**Competitive employment** — The regulatory definition of competitive employment with respect to client choice

**Inclusive education** — The availability of adequate resources and services to ensure a quality education leading to vocational success

**Council Liaison** — Improved communication and cooperation with other agencies/councils charged with providing services to persons with disabilities in Missouri

**Responsiveness to consumer input**  
-Provide opportunities to include consumer input in program development and delivery of services to RSB's clients

**RSB State and Strategic Plans** — Provide consumer input into and a review process for RSB's major policy and service delivery planning documents

**Measurement of consumer satisfaction** — The review of RSB's current consumer satisfaction survey and suggestions for modification or replacement of the survey instrument

**Delivery of services to minorities** — Review RSB policies and plans for improvement of the services offered to traditionally underrepresented groups, including minorities

## **8. Summary**

The Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind has had a wide-ranging impact on the delivery of services and the planning of future services and policies for RSB. In its initial year the Council has done much to earn the respect and trust of both consumers and providers of rehabilitation services in Missouri. Consideration of the subjects on the agenda for 1995 will increase the Council's involvement with the interests of consumers in Missouri, with the attendant improvement in the availability, quality, and diversity of rehabilitation services for the blind and visually impaired.

